



310 CMR 7.73: Reducing Methane Emissions from Natural Gas Distribution Mains and Services

Overview

On August 11, 2017, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) published a new regulation, 310 CMR 7.73 *Reducing Methane Emissions from Natural Gas Distribution Mains and Services*, to reduce methane emissions from the natural gas distribution network in Massachusetts. The regulation imposes annually-declining emission limits on Massachusetts gas operators in 2018, 2019 and 2020 to help the Commonwealth meet the 2020 limit on GHG emissions established pursuant to the Global Warming Solutions Act. This regulation establishes mass-based annually declining limits on GHG emissions.

Requirements

- Establishes mass-based, annually-declining limits on methane emissions from natural gas mains and services for individual natural gas distribution system operators; and
- Requires gas operators to annually report the total miles of their main and service pipelines by material type.
- Applies to gas operators with a Gas System Enhancement Plan (GSEP) order from DPU, which details the schedule for replacement of older leak prone distribution system pipe for each gas operator.

Changes to the Proposal

In response to public comment on the proposed regulation, the final regulation includes the following changes:

- Edited definition of 'gas operator' to clarify which gas companies are covered by the regulation
- Combined National Grid subsidiary limits to provide more flexibility; updated limits based on 2016 actual data and updated GSEP data
- Added a process for gas operators to petition MassDEP for a portion of a methane emissions "set-aside" due to:
 - GSEP updates
 - Greater distribution system growth than anticipated
 - other unanticipated issues
- Included a program review to consider addressing years after 2020 and/or using new measurement technologies that may become available

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